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The Cromwell Models Panzer III D1 command Tank

By Phil Hyslop

Cromwell Models Panzer IIID1 Panzerbefehlswagen was one of the company's more recent, low key releases, designed as a conversion kit for the Dragon Panzer III E. Phil Hyslop takes us through building the kit.

This is a vehicle that I have always found appealing and I was very keen to get hold of an example. My first impressions upon opening the box were very favourable although the complexity of the suspension system did look a little daunting. As you can see from the photographs of the unpainted model, for a conversion kit you need very little from the donor kit. In fact the main requirement is a set of 36cm track, although with a lengthened

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chassis a standard after market set may not be long enough. The other parts are mainly tool stowage and light fittings etc. You may well be able to find all these parts in your spares box already, especially given the proliferation of extra parts in the Dragon Panzer III kits. I understand from Cromwell that they intend to release the model as a full kit soon, partly because the Dragon Panzer IIIE can be hard to find and Cromwell realise modellers are reluctant to 'waste' so much of the donor kit.

The main hull casting was very well cast with the usual Cromwell style open floor and required very little additional work before I began to fit the suspension. I recommend taking your time and doing a lot of dry runs. I ran into problems locating the return rollers when I found that the tracks were fouling the track guards. Some slight adjustment was called for and the problem was overcome. The suspension components have well marked location points on the hull and its just a matter of getting everything round the right way. Despite the fragile appearance of the running gear the whole thing is quite solid once it has been assembled.

I chose to use a set of Dragon 36cm tracks which fit the bill although they are maybe not as sharp as some of the after market alternatives. Cromwell provide the supports for the frame ariel but the modeller must make the actual ariel. I made his using plastic rod, but brass would work just as well.

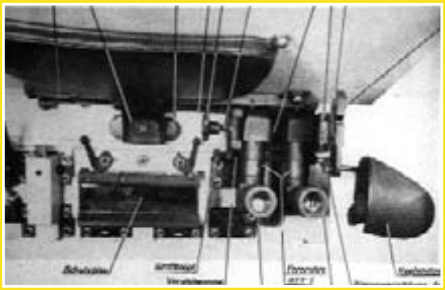
The turret was virtually built straight from the box with my only additions being a machine gun for the front mount and lifting points on the turret roof. The side hatches on the turret come with fully detailed interiors and the roof has the additional hatches peculiar to the command version moulded in place. It would be quite simple to open up the biggest hatch on the roof and add the huge extendible telescopic ariel.

I made new grab handles for the engine deck and fitted a tow rope made from nylon rope in its stowed position. Almost all the tool stowage I added came from Dragon donor kits with the exception of the jack which is a Tamiya item and the smoke grenade rack which is a Sovereign item and the rhomboid number panels which I scratchbuilt.

The crew which I chose also comes from the Cromwell range and is designed specifically for this turret. These figures required a small amount of adjustment to make certain that the arms aligned correctly, and that they were holding the correct bits of the vehicle.

I always paint my models using Humbrol enamels and with the IIID1 the choice is between grey and grey. In the end he went for grey with the distinctive yellow centred crosses to add a splash of colour and the crew were also finished using enamels.

Below: A head on view of a Panzer III D Command tank which appears to have been used for training. Noteable are the dummy turret machine gun, the open pistol port that replaced the hull machine gun and the notek headlight bracket which is missing the light itself. The chassis number is stencilled across the front of the hull.
(Photo: Akira Takiguchi)



Above The drivers position, and detail of his optics (Photo: Detlev Terlisten)

inside the

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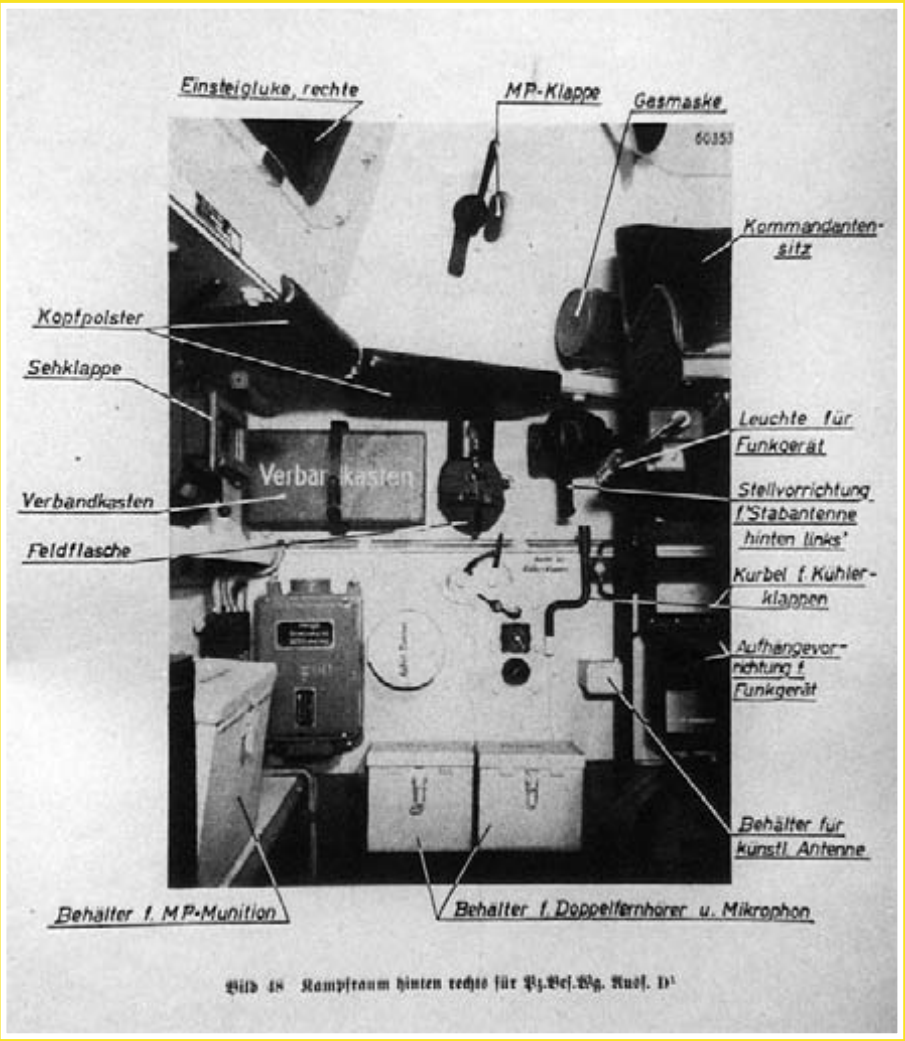
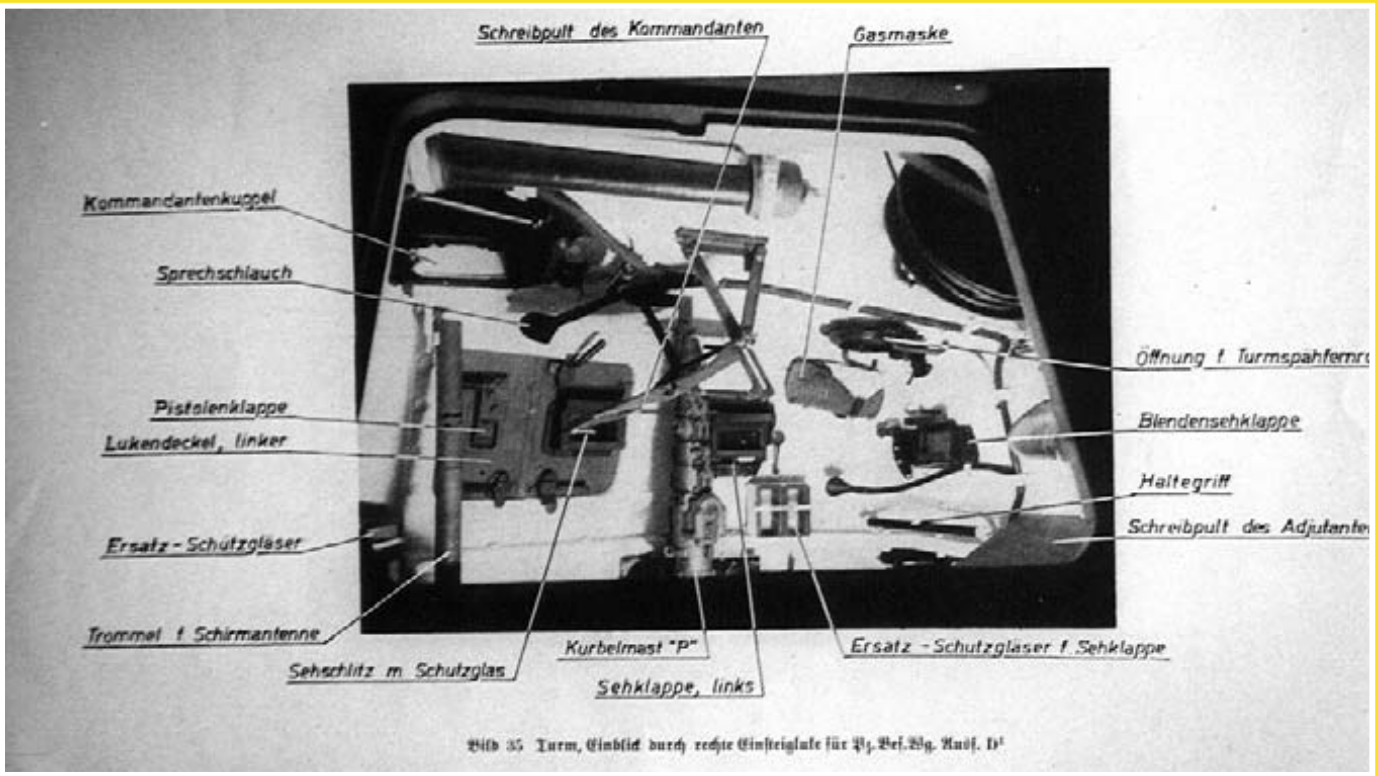
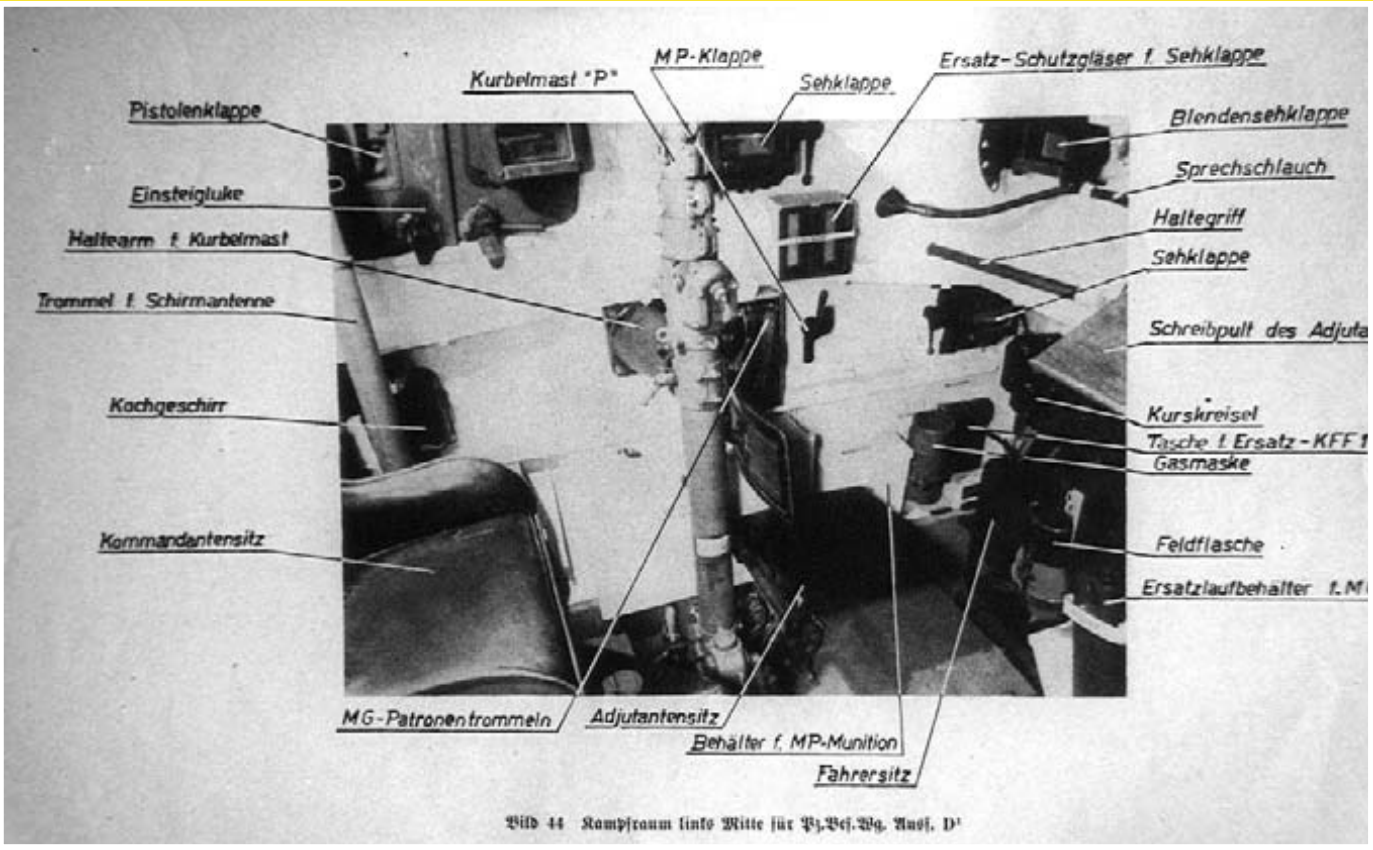


Below An excellent view into the turret from the outside. You can just make out the grey painted roof hatch for the telescopic ariel. (Photo: Detlev Terlisten)

Above The engine firewall seen from the radio operators position. The commanders seat is built ontop of the radio racks, which must have been a hot place to sit. (Photo: Detlev Terlisten)





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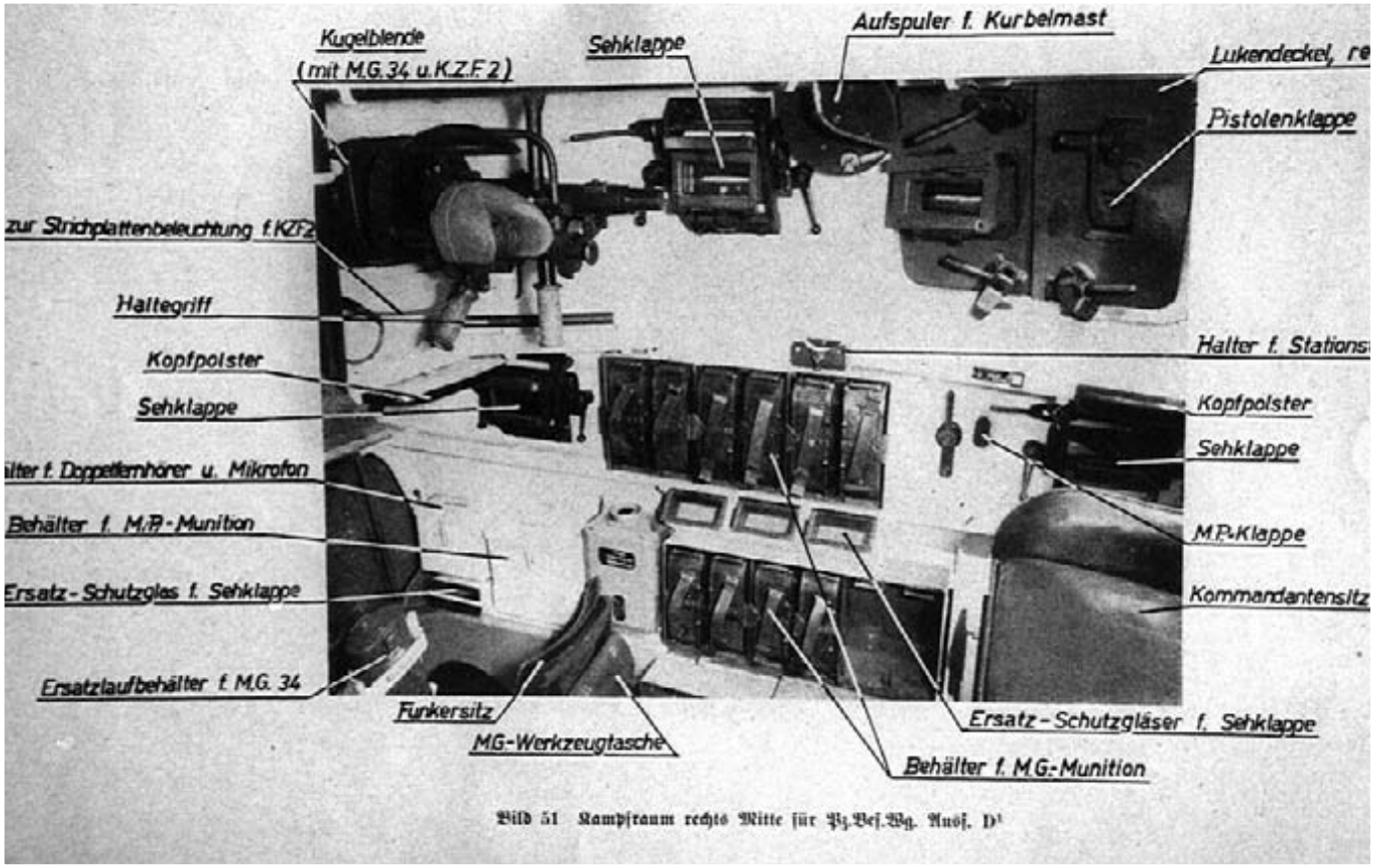
Above A view looking down into the turret from the right hand hatch showing the mounting of the extendable roof ariel with the commanders seat in the forground. Notice the voice pipe for the observer whos seat is seen in the centre of the picture.
(Photo: Detlev Terlisten)

Below Looking from the other side of the turret, you can see that with the turret fixed, there is no turret ring, which opens up the space inside the vehicle. At the top of the picture you can see the cable reel that was visible in the view through the open hatch.
(Photo: Detlev Terlisten)



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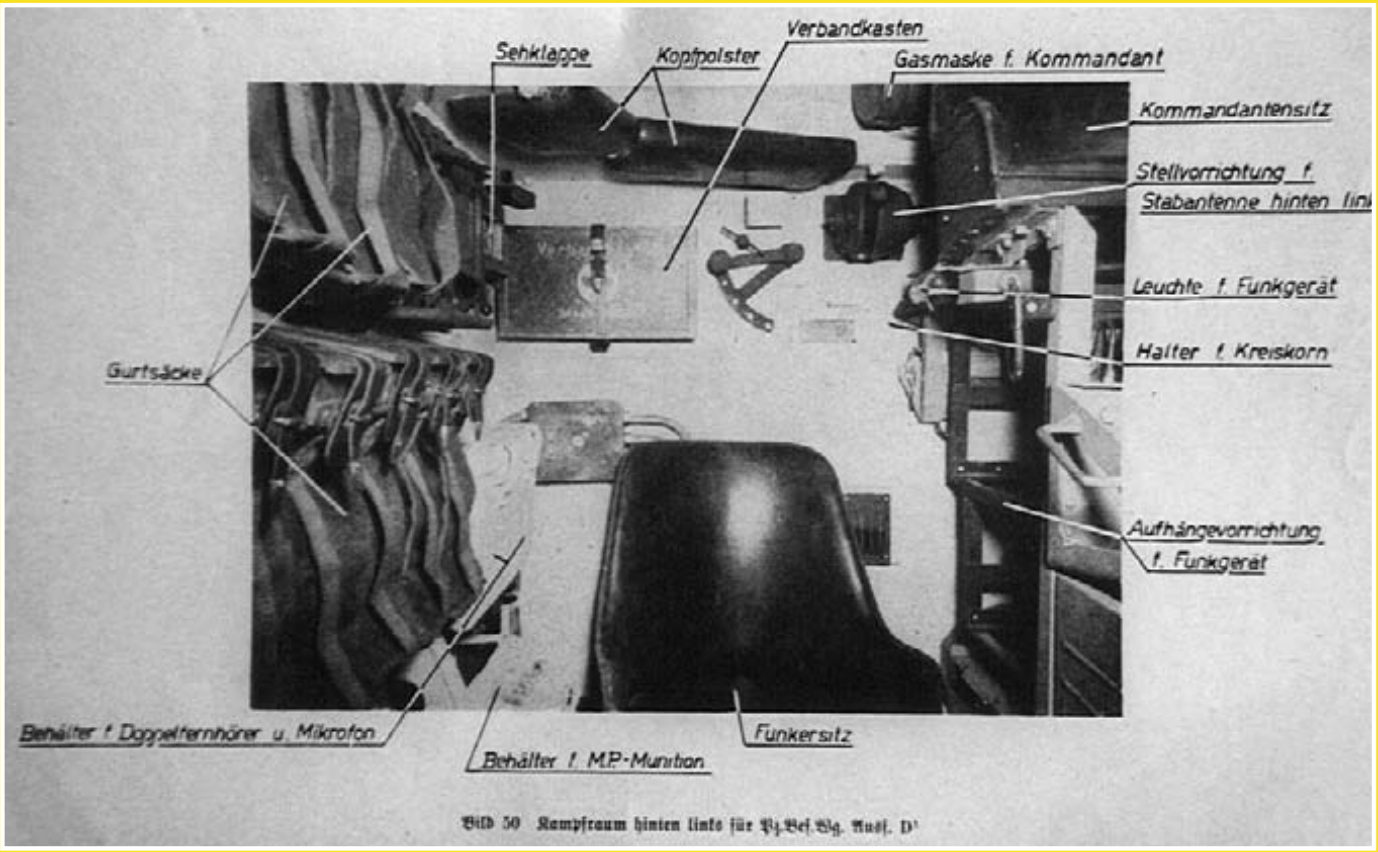
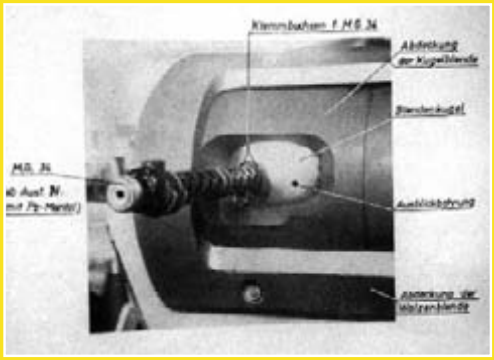
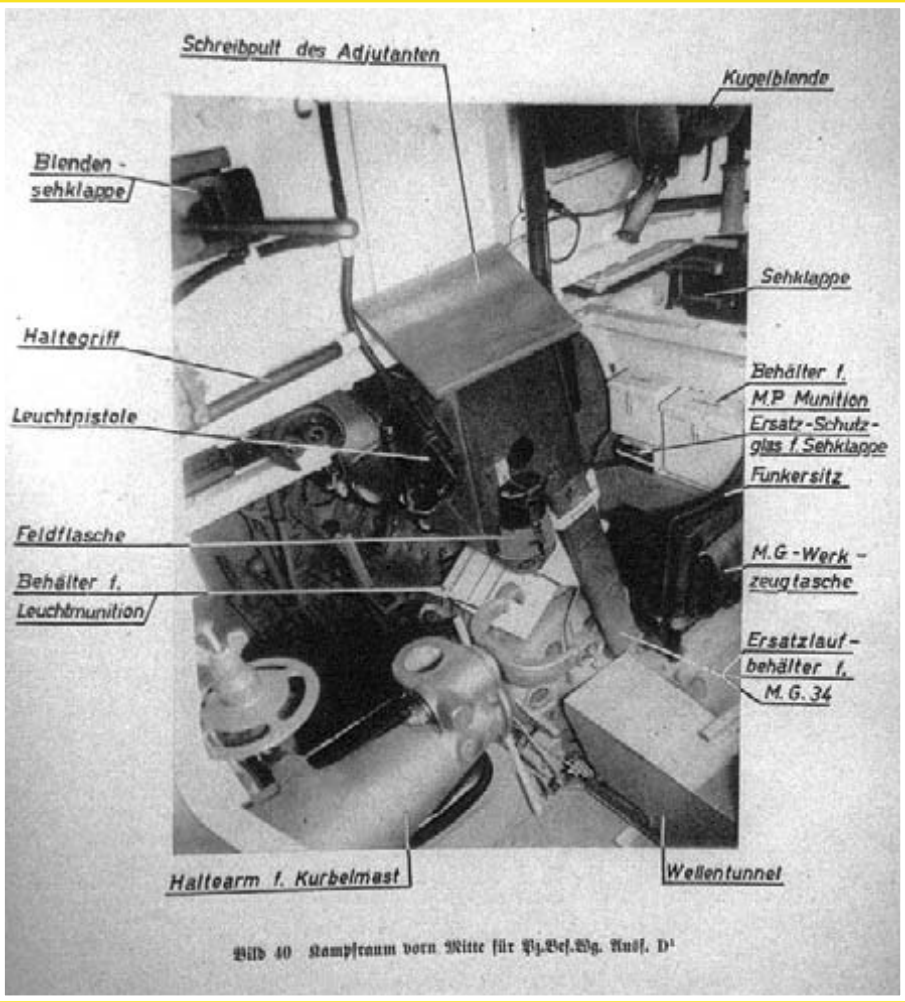


Above A clear shot of the radio racking under the commanders seat. This is a different vehicle from the other pictures and the tell tale perforated rib that is visble under the ammo bags suggests that it is based on the standard PzIII chassis possibly a Panzerbefehlswagen E.
(Photo: Detlev Terlisten)



Above The exterior and interior mountings for the turret MG
(Photo: Detlev Terlisten)



Above Looking down into the hull towards the front of the tank, the frontface of the turret is at the top of the picture with the MG mount just visible. In the centre is what looks like a small map table mounted above the transmission. In the foreground is the mounting for the telescopic mast which has been removed for clarity.
(Photo: Detlev Terlisten)

3D in service

Hard to distinguish this as a IIID with the distinctive suspension largely hidden as the vehicle crosses a pond.
(Photo: Akira Takiguchi)

A superb overall view of this rarely pictured vehicle. Apart from the single balkenkruze on either side of the hull, the vehicle is unmarked. Notice the unusual verticle rod mounted on the cupola.
(Photo: Akira Takiguchi)

An impressive frontal shot showing the articulation of the suspension as the tank climbs a mound of earth.
(Photo: Akira Takiguchi)

Another shot of the tank crossing the pond which gives us a good view of the frame ariel and the spare wheels stowed on the engine deck.
(Photo: Akira Takiguchi)

This excellent close up shot provides much detail of the roadwheels. Notice the ammount of slack in the track and the casting number on the drive sprocket.
(Photo: Akira Takiguchi)

Possibly the result of too much slack - a thrown track. A crewman considers the problem of refitting the track.
(Photo: Akira Takiguchi)